

27 September 2021

[REDACTED]

By email: [REDACTED]  
Ref: H202111226

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 30 August 2021 regarding the use of Bluetooth tracing during the recent August 2021 COVID-19 outbreak. You asked:

*"I seek all statistics, information and reports held about the usage of Bluetooth by contact tracers during the August 2021 COVID-19 outbreak.*

*Specifically, is there any information (including demographic data) on how many cases:*  
— *were asked if they had been using the Bluetooth functionality?*  
— *were using the Bluetooth functionality?*  
— *were asked to upload their Bluetooth keys to the NCTS?*  
— *had their Bluetooth keys sent out to the general public?*

*I also ask whether contact tracers, or the scripts they are following, have forgotten about Bluetooth functionality. I also ask that this request be considered urgently, as it appears only one Bluetooth key has been sent out this entire outbreak."*

The Auckland Regional Public Health Service have confirmed that all cases are asked, as part of the case investigation process, if they have Bluetooth functionality activated on their NZ COVID Tracer app. The National Investigation and Tracing Centre has engaged with public health units to maximise the use of Bluetooth alerts where possible throughout this outbreak. The utilisation of Bluetooth technology is part of standard operating procedures for COVID-19 case investigation as well as included within the relevant training materials. Data regarding whether a case does or does not have Bluetooth activated is not directly recorded in the National Contact Tracing Solution.

The sending of Bluetooth alerts wholly relies on a positive case entering a unique code, generated by the case investigator, into the app on their phone. The sending and receipt of Bluetooth alerts is dependent on individuals having had Bluetooth activated on their mobile phone and in the NZ COVID Tracer app. Individuals are only asked to share their Bluetooth tracing data and digital diary if they test positive for COVID-19. Furthermore, if an individual is identified as a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, it remains their choice whether to share their digital diary or to upload their Bluetooth keys.

The use of Bluetooth tracing is optional, and as of 20 September 2021, fewer than 10 positive COVID-19 cases have uploaded their Bluetooth keys. These cases are predominantly female, identify as New Zealand European, Asian and Pacific, and are aged between 20 and 58 years. Due to the low numbers, providing any further specific details may compromise the privacy of the individual. The Ministry of Health can confirm that one (1) unique code has been generated during this outbreak, which did not result in a successful upload of that user's Bluetooth keys.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry of Health website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases).

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Toby Regan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Toby Regan  
**Acting Group Manager**  
**National Investigation and Tracing Centre**